

EDITORIAL

Joint Blood Council

THE JOINT BLOOD COUNCIL is a voluntary, nonprofit organization embracing the five national associations principally concerned with the procurement, processing, preservation and distribution of human blood and its derivatives. These are the American Association of Blood Banks, American Hospital Association, American Medical Association, American National Red Cross and American Society of Clinical Pathologists.

From World War II until the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in the summer of 1950, blood banks kept growing and increasing in number and variety, but there was little coordination either technically or administratively on a local or national basis. Conflicts arose between the Red Cross and the private banks in the commercial, community and hospital categories. Seeking a way out of this confusion of aims and interests, the Medical Policy Committee of the Red Cross under pressure called a meeting which led to the Boston Agreement of 1950. Other organizations hoping to insure the shipment of sufficient whole blood to Korea sent representatives to Boston. The American Association of Blood Banks (representing the California Blood Bank System), the American Hospital Association, the American Medical Association (representing the C.M.A. Committee on Blood Banks), and the American National Red Cross all later ratified the agreement. It provided for free exchange of blood between Red Cross blood centers and other blood banks on a unit for unit basis and urged adherence to blood banking standards to be set by the National Institutes of Health.

Military and civilian blood requirements were met during the Korean War and the Boston Agreement remained the official policy of the organizations that signed it. However, different interpretations of its

language and intent led to more conflict. There was clear need for something more; and the parties to the Boston Agreement, together with the American Society of Clinical Pathologists, decided there should be a voluntary national organization to insure an adequate supply of blood in peace or emergency and to stimulate blood research. Thus the Joint Blood Council came into being on March 16, 1955. Subsequently it opened an office in Washington, D. C. This entire program was stimulated by the A.M.A. through passage of the Ludwig Resolution introduced to the A.M.A. House of Delegates by Dr. J. Lafe Ludwig of the California Medical Association in June 1953. The resolution is as follows:

"WHEREAS, The ready availability of blood and blood derivatives has become a vital necessity to modern practice in both the civilian and military populations and therefore a matter of highest concern to the physician; and

"WHEREAS, The independent operation of blood banks of all degrees of excellence throughout the nation by many different agencies, some lay and some medical, has resulted in some confusion and friction between blood banks and organizations operating blood banks; and

"WHEREAS, The general public is confused, irritated and critical of the varying methods of operation among blood banks in the same or contiguous areas; and

"WHEREAS, The professional aspects of the drawing of blood, its fractionation and its use as a therapeutic tool must be under medical control, and such medical control on a national scale logically should be a function of the American Medical Association; and

"WHEREAS, The American Red Cross has already been designated by the government as the official

blood recruitment and distributing agency for the military services; and

"WHEREAS, The present American Red Cross program of so-called 'free' blood without requirement for replacement has made collection of adequate supplies for civilian use difficult, has been a tremendous drain on Red Cross funds which might be better devoted to purposes more consistent with Red Cross functions, and is inaccurate to the extent that blood is not free but is paid for by the community at large in contributions and by the government through tax revenues; now therefore be it

"RESOLVED, That this House of Delegates urge the establishment of a coordinated national blood bank program operated by the American Medical Association, the American National Red Cross and other qualified organizations interested in blood banking, on the following basis:

1. Medical aspects of blood banking shall be under the exclusive control of the medical profession.
2. Business administration, donor recruitment, stockpiling for civil defense and disaster relief, allocation of supplies to meet military needs, and public relations shall be matter of joint concern.
3. The supply of blood shall be maintained on a replacement basis.
4. The national blood bank program shall be a financially self-supporting but nonprofit arrangement operated in the national interest but with the sole aim of promoting the widest availability of safe, usable blood and its derivatives."

The primary purpose of the Council is to establish a national blood program in order to assure an adequate supply of blood and blood derivatives to the civilian and military population at all times. Corollary purposes shall be to:

1. Develop ways and means to make blood and its derivatives available to all persons in the United States;
2. Stimulate and advise on areas of research in the collection, preservation and use of blood and its derivatives;
3. Collect, study and disseminate information on blood and blood derivatives;
4. Establish minimal standards for voluntary accreditation of blood banks and to establish a means of inspection for accreditation;
5. Coordinate existing systems and encourage and institute plans where necessary for the exchange of blood or blood credits between accredited banks on a state, regional and national basis;
6. Encourage the public by appropriate means

to donate blood for civilian and defense requirements and to assist in the establishment of uniform national publicity policies;

7. Distribute annually a list of blood banks accredited by this organization;

8. Serve, upon invitation, as a fact-finding and arbitration body in disputes arising from the collection and use of blood and its derivatives;

9. Serve upon invitation as an advisory group to federal and military agencies having to deal with blood and its derivatives.

The Council itself does not procure blood, does not process or store it, and will not itself engage in blood research. Operating primarily through its member institutions it tries to stimulate all worthwhile operations in the entire field of blood.

As to philosophy on the question of charges, the Council by-laws state: "Since blood is derived from human beings only, it should not be sold for profit. However, all services rendered in the collection, storage and administration of blood cost something and are paid for by or on behalf of every recipient of such services. When a service charge is made to the recipient, it may include all or part of the costs of operation, including normal depreciation but the intentional realization of substantial profit is not approved."

As to the accomplishments of the Council, it was disappointing to California doctors that the Council did not take steps toward becoming the contracting agent with the Department of Defense before the recent and current serum albumin project was instigated. This matter was called to the attention of the A.M.A. House of Delegates in June of 1957 by a resolution offered by Dr. Robertson Ward of the California Medical Association. However, it is well to point out that more than 5,200 hospital blood banks and other blood transfusion services have received or are now receiving by mail a questionnaire from the Joint Blood Council, representing a major effort to provide a guide to the vast and almost uncharted sea of blood banking and related activities in the United States. This questionnaire represents a second phase of the Council's efforts to bring the blood transfusion picture into proper focus. The first part was a postal card survey of blood usage during the calendar year 1956. This survey produced some eye-opening information on the sources of blood in the United States. It also supplied the first reliable information on how much blood is being transfused in the nation.

The Council itself grew out of the need for closer cooperation among facilities which handle blood and between the independent blood banks and the regional and national banking systems. Its current survey of blood transfusion services is a step in that

direction. The Council's preliminary research has firmed its conviction that blood transfusion services are operating under handicaps that cry out for remedy; likewise the Council's realization that remedies can be applied only after proper diagnosis. The current questionnaire will help clarify the symptoms that will make diagnosis and remedy possible, but its success depends greatly on the number and qual-

ity of replies to the questionnaire. Thus the Council emphasizes that the sooner its questionnaire is filled out, analyzed and interpreted, the sooner will there be a general fund of information necessary to the proper development of a national blood program—a well known and respected transfusion service to the people of the United States through the medical profession.

Postgraduate Education Courses for 1958 Annual Session

AN INNOVATION in C.M.A. meetings is being planned for the 1958 Annual Session. It is proposed to offer three postgraduate education courses of 9 hours each in connection with the scientific meetings. They will be given from 9 a.m. until noon, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, April 28 to 30. It is expected that official credit would be given for these courses.

As now planned, each of the three medical schools in Southern California would put on a course of three hours daily for the three days of the meeting.

Present plans call for University of Southern California to handle a course on liver diseases. U.C.L.A. Medical School would present a course on abdominal pain and College of Medical Evangelists would take charge of a series on management of trauma.

It is planned to make an admission charge for these courses, although the full details remain to be worked out.

Further announcements will be made when plans are completed.